Depot Town Rag

Volume 22, Number 1

January/ February

Everyone's in love... ...at the depot

100% FREE *RAG* CONTENT

A PUBLICATION OF THE DEPOT TOWN ASSOCIATION, INC. The Old Caboose, 400 Market Place, Ypsilanti, Michigan 48198

Aww, go ahead; get romantic on us

It is no accident that Valentine's Day comes in the middle of winter when we most appreciate some cuddling and warmth. This issue of *The Rag* directs our attention to those local enterprises who do that all year around. Whether it's a box of candy, flowers, or perfume, many of the experts on this block offer services that are easily featured as unique to the season.

In the process of finding such highly personal amenities, Depot Town's clientele is encouraged to get romantic with each other and the neighborhood. Tell your friends how much you love them and share your mushy feelings with the whole block. It's an ethic you won't find at a consumer mall.

Nighttime sledding from Old Town Hall to the Huron River is no longer possible, but there are plenty of other romantic possibilities on the block...

Depot Town's Top Ten most romantic places:

1. The Tridge, where it passes under the Cross Street bridge
2. At the depot when we remember the golden days of railroad travel
3. Evening walks in Riverside Park
4. Dancing in the middle of the street during summer Cruise Nights
5. Jogging around the track on Frog Island
6. A quiet back-room table at Café Luwak
7. On the platform of the Old Caboose
8. Train watching from the trackside deck at the Freighthouse
9. Under the streetlight at the Crossing Guard Tower at Cross & River Streets when the train goes by

...and, in any of the district's fine eateries,

10. A late-night dinner in a cozy booth at one of several fireplaces available.

Now, *that's* romantic.

...down to the depot and watch the trains!

Romance flourishes at the depot

Few neighborhoods can so easily languish in the romance of transportation and travel as Ypsilanti's Depot Town. With a live railroad track running right through it, the trains are hard to miss. Add to that mix the train whistles, clanging crossing signals, and the "whoosh" of the trains as they speed through, and you've got excitement unparalleled by more modern commercial enterprises.

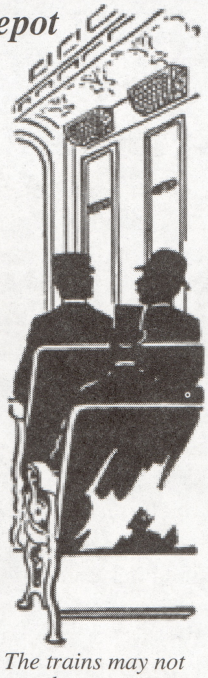
"Look at all the people gathered 'round the depot,"

...from the popular Depot Town Rag chorus.

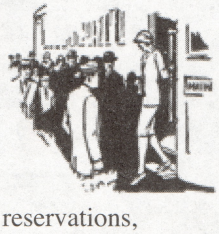
Whether it's waving at the passing trains, ogling antique cars and trucks in the museums, or summer Cruise Nights replete with Fifties' dream cars and Elvis ballads, romanticism flourishes in old places like this.

Depot denizens encourage first-timers to give way to the urge to remember old times and continue some of our grandest traditions of warmth, friendliness, and blatant sentimentality. We celebrate those values with great regularity down here.

People come from all over to walk this block at every time of year as they visit the Ypsilanti Automotive Heritage Collection, the Michigan Firetruck Museum, and the many historic and romantic sites between. Historic Districts preserve a lot more than just the built environment.



The trains may not stop here any more, but the romance of rail travel remains a dynamic presence in this historic neighborhood

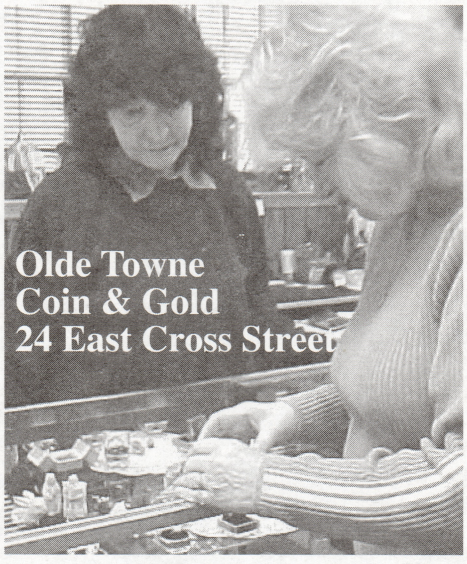


We found romance in train songs!

Hum along, if you wish, but you're down in Depot Town; you can sing right out loud if you feel like it...

"Now the rain's a-fallin',
hear the train's a-callin, "Whooee!"
"Hear dat lonesome whistle
blowin' 'cross the trestle, "Whooee!"
(My mama done tol' me)
A-whooee-ah-whooee
ol' clickety-clack's
a-echoin' back
th' blues in the night."
(From *Blues in the Night*, Mercer/Arlen)

"Got my bags, got my reservations,
Spent each dime I could afford.
Like a child in wild anticipation,
I long to hear that, 'All aboard!'
Seven...that's the time we leave, at seven.
I'll be waitin' up at heaven,
Countin' every mile of railroad track,
that takes me back...."
(From *Sentimental Journey* by Brown/ Homer/Green)



*Sharon and Gwen Robine examine the goods as they enjoy **Olde Towne Coin & Gold's** 28th year on the block where they market silver, gold, and coins. Romantics can also find engagement and wedding rings here.*

Love nests exposed

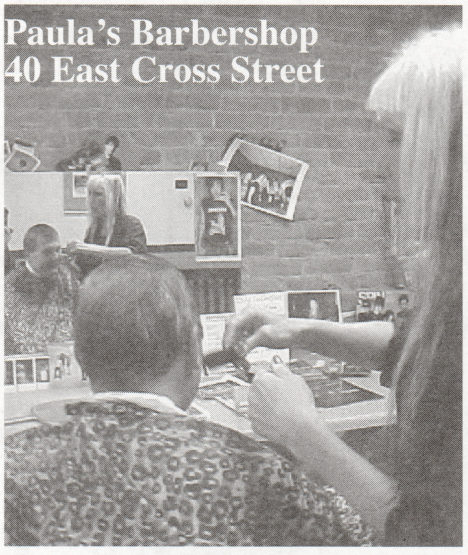
Some recent cases on the block:

• A couples dating service often calls Cady's to reserve a table for two using only first names. They set them up for their first date.

• Above: Aubree's bartender, Mary Points, married Ryan McDonald last fall and had their reception upstairs at Sticks' pool parlor.

• Linda French and John McMillan met at the Sidetrack—25 years after their sophomore/senior separation in high school.

• Sandee and Bill French met here 38 years ago when he rented an apartment over what is now their own restaurant: Cady's Grill.



*Before retirement, Bob Ancsheutz got his hair cut at a barbershop in Troy. For the next two years he still drove 105 miles for haircuts there. Finally his wife, Jan, persuaded him to just walk down to **Paula's Barbershop** and she says, "SinDerElla does a superb job" on him.*

At first sight—across a crowded room—in an Ypsi saloon

Heide Otto was catching a cold. Her throat was sore. She stopped into Aubree's one evening in 1989. "I just wanted to get a shot of whiskey to soothe my throat," she remembers. But that little visit changed everything.

Otto noticed the Short brothers gathered at a table in celebration. Bill Short III had just accepted the Chamber of Commerce Business of the Year award and the whole crew from Huron Sign Company had assembled to bask in their well-deserved honor. Otto offered her congratulations and was about to leave when she noticed a new face in the group.

"There he was," she remembers, "sitting right next to Tom Short. I really wanted to meet him so, when Tom Short got up, I sat down in his chair and asked Tom to introduce me."

It turned out the object of her attention was named Tom, too—Tom Basinger, a glass bender in the sign company's neon shop.

Now properly introduced, Otto didn't give Short's seat back to him. "Instead," recalls Otto, "I ordered him a shot of schnapps."

Several schnapps later, Basinger and the object of her intentions went upstairs to hear famed Detroit blues singer Juanita MacRae perform. Later, when they returned to Huron Signs' table, they discovered Short had left. "Tom [Basinger] was depending on him for a ride home," says Otto, "and he didn't know what he was going to do."

Further questioning of her new acquaintance found that he lived in Lakeland, near Zukey Lake, and Otto was not prepared to drive all that way with someone she didn't really know. She drove him to the house of a friend of his in Ypsilanti and figured he could find some way home the next day.

That solved the immediate problem, but Basinger wanted to meet his guardian angel again a few days later. "I couldn't remember her name," he says today, "but I remembered that she wore a blue denim skirt. That was the clue that helped most." Turns out Basinger is a sucker for jeans in any form and that was the one attribute he could remember about the young woman who had helped him out that night.

Basinger asked around among his friends, hoping they remembered the woman's name. "I didn't remember many small details," he says, "but, somehow, I knew she was the woman for me. I was determined to find her. The denim skirt was my only clue."

Lucky for Basinger, he had given Otto his phone number and she gave him a call to set up another meeting at Aubree's. Soon after, Basinger asked Otto if she would like to get engaged. "We were standing in front of Miller's Ice Cream Parlor," says Otto, "when he asked me."

A real estate agent at the time, Otto says she's always been good at closing a sale. "He didn't actually ask me to *marry* him," she recalls. "He just asked if I wanted to be *engaged* to him. But I knew how to close the deal; I said I would have to have a date in mind to get engaged."

They consulted a calendar and agreed on a wedding date. Today, after sixteen years of marriage, they—and their twelve-year-old daughter Lydia— live in Depot Town and the whole family still frequents the table at Aubree's where Heide Otto and Tom Basinger first met.

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River Street paving was completed in November

Sherry Garbacz

Funerals are having an easier time getting to Highland Cemetery

Sherry Garbacz minds the store at **Garrett's Florist & Garden Center** just across the street from the grand entrance to historic Highland Cemetery on North River Street. She and her husband live next door now, but she remembers her childhood in Depot Town living above the store with parents Velmer and Gladys Presler. Many locals can remember the steer horns mounted on the front of Velmer's car.

How does the new paving of North River Street affect her neighborhood? "Cars still drive too fast here," Garbacz says. But the funeral processions are easing by again with their usual sad dignity.

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Freighthouse wedding shocked conservative family members

Lynn Radtke and Rick Talbot's wedding was held in the Freighthouse in 1983. "My mother said, 'You're not going to get married in that place, are you?'" remembers Radtke, the owner of Apple Annie's Vintage Clothing since 1976. "But we went ahead with our unusual plan," she says.

Today's wedding planners could learn a lot from Lynn's plan. End-to-end events switched throughout the unique event.

Five stages of celebration: A gathering in the coffeeshop started it all off. Ushers then welcomed the crowd to the north end where chairs were set up for the ceremony. As soon as that was done, the group of 250+ was led back to the south end for the reception. While that was going on, caterers reorganized the north end for a sit-down Chinese dinner from the Mayflower. The final stage was to make a dance floor to be backed up by famed Blue Front Persuaders. The complex staging flowed smoothly and guest marveled at the entertainment possibilities in a warehouse that stored residents' Model T's in the 1920s.

Their *non-traditional* wedding worked better than many of the *traditional* kind. Lynn and Rick are still married with daughter Samantha, 22, a senior at Grand Valley State University and son Matthew, 18, a senior at Plymouth High School.

Queen of Hearts, 32 E. Cross

*Terry Morrow had the **Queen of Hearts** bakery ready for inspection by the Department of Agriculture in November and opened her top quality bakery the following week.*

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***Spa Burjon's** Jennifer Bunting gives a manicure to Patricia Potter, former co-owner of Country on the Avenue. Working from appointments since 2004, Bunting missed only a few days to give birth to baby Ava last May. Also at Spa Burjon, massage Therapist Sarah Musil supports "the body's need to relax and heal..."*

No disrespect intended; nicknames are *LOVE* names

Have you ever noticed how, the more nicknames a person has, the more loved the person seems? Parents and coaches have known that for a long time. People who live in Ypsilanti call their town "Ypsi" but, like San Franciscans, we don't like outsiders to shorten it; you've got to be local to get away with that. "Frisco" can get you thrown out of a bar.

Some Ann Arbor folks called that town "A Squared" [A^2] for a while, but it never really caught on. Now they are calling a section of their city "Lower Town" again, and we hope it catches on. They deserve their share of hokey charm too.

"At the depot" is what they used to say in nineteenth century Ypsilanti when they talked about Depot Town. The "town" part and the capitalization came with the historic preservation movement. At least we never got to the point of having a "Down by the Old Chocolate Chip Cookie Factory Mill Stream." Quaintness has its limits.

At the east end of our block the Ypsilanti Automotive Heritage Collection is more often called the "Car Museum," "Miller Motors," the "Hudson Dealership," or even "Jack Miller's Place." It's much loved.

At the west end is the Michigan Antique Fire Equipment Preservation Group, more commonly known as the "Firehouse Museum." There's lots of love there, too.

[Dear Mr. Rooney:
Is it all right if we just call you "Andy"?]

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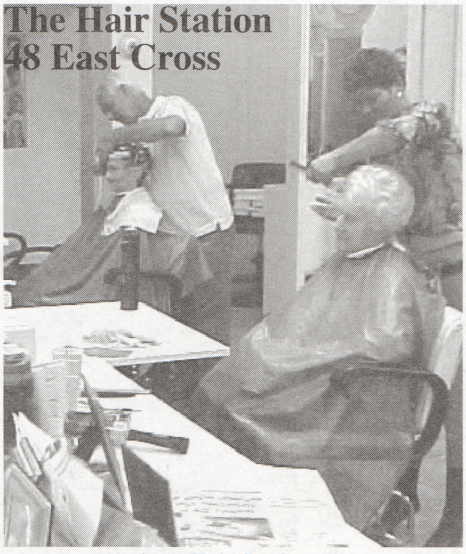

*At Lynn Harden's **Hair Station**, former owner Richard Reid lends a hand with Elaine Karam's "do", while Melissa Hill puts finishing touches on Virginia Ruelle. Regular customers say Reid might be the handiest landlord on the block.*

Clinical therapist sees a "love destination"

When M. Douglas Evans first placed his ad in *The Rag* asking if readers were focused on their "passions in life," some may have thought such material an awkward fit with advertising for "baked-on automotive finishes," "sign painting," and "financial investments." But Evans tells how he recommends this block to couples in the process of "finding themselves" again.

"I tell them to go for a stroll, see the museums together, have a date at an intimate restaurant," says this therapist from a Dixboro clinic who also maintains a practice in private therapy. "Depot Town is truly a lovers' destination," he says with great enthusiasm. "Its warmth and authenticity create a perfect stage upon which couples can build or rekindle their relationship."

In the March/April *Rag*:

We've been dining at depot eateries since 1845. Tasty reviews of past and present culinary practices on the block. Let's eat at the depot!

Depot Town Rag

"All the news that fits, we print"
A monthly publication of
the Depot Town Association, Inc.
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Ypsilanti, Michigan 48197
Web site: www.depottown.org
E-mail: depottown_events@yahoo.com
Editor: thomasdodd@comcast.net

The Depot Town Association, Inc.

Gary McKeever, President
Mary Decker, Vice President
Ray Strassel, Treasurer
Sandee French, Secretary, Past President
DTA meets at 6:30 p.m. on the third Wednesday of each month in the back room of Café Luwak, 42 East Cross St.

December's raffle winner

was Deb Schultz of New Hudson who first discovered Depot Town when her daughter enrolled at EMU. "We heard about you from a story in the *Eastern Echo*," says Schultz, "and we went down to explore. We bought a stool at Salt City." They came back. Her husband joined them for dinner at the Sidetrack and, when he left, "the girls went shopping. We shopped at Apotheke and Apple Annie's and also discovered The Rocket on Michigan Avenue."

Awards went to: Paula's B'shop, Olde Towne Coin & Gold, Salt City Antiques, Quinn's Essentials, Cheeky Monkey, Aubree's, Apple Annie's/MacDonald's, Gordon's Five & Dime, Sidetrack, Enchanted Florist

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"I found love on this two-way street, but lost it somewhere out on the highway!"

What kind of love are you looking for?

In his *History of Ypsilanti*, Harvey Coleman notes, "It was a wise providence that guided the good judge [Augustus Woodward] in his remarkable suggestion [of Ypsilanti as his city's name]. The name stands quite aloof from commonplace city cognomens. It is a name of personality, of distinction, a name in which one may take pride, a proper advertisement for a city, a name to be pronounced with emphasis and to be written with a flourish on hotel registers in distant places. It is a name that is a peculiar possession. There is no other Ypsilanti…"

Aside from naming this place for the hero of the 1824 battle at the Citadel of Argos, our unique Greek name brought with it a cultural tradition of the ancients.

Demetrius and his forebears brought a new kind of love to America: Greek love. Ypsilanti's ancestors had a word for it; in fact, the ancient Greeks had *three* words for it:

Filial [ΦΙΛΙΑΛ] – **Brotherly/sisterly love.** Philadelphia, another city with a proud Greek name, uses this Greek definition as their motto. Many Americans only admit to this kind of love at football games. In Ypsi, there's a lot of bro/sis hugging going on.

Eros [ΕΡΟΣ] **- Erotic, sexual love.** Urban legend shows how, at the end of the nineteenth century, Depot Town's Ma Bush claimed her employees were not "ladies of the evening". They delivered their services 24/7. A few A^2 masseuses are still operating that way.

Agape [ΑΓΑΠΕ] **- Love of community.** Christians celebrate a communal meal in token of the fellowship at the Last Supper. Depot Towners know that feeling as they celebrate their respect for each other and for their neighborhood. There is no holiday set aside for it. Every day is a good day to recognize and express your commitments.

Enchanted Florist
46 East Cross

Laura Lanzon preps a bouquet for delivery from her ***Enchanted Florist.*** *Part of this florist's "enchantment" is her ability to enhance the romance— whether it's a personal or a corporate commitment. Laura and her crew are celebrating their "fifth fabulous year."*

Couples created here

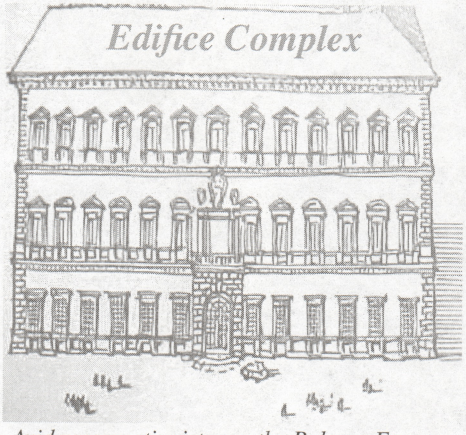
Dozens of couples have found each other on this block and their relationships continue. This list is certainly incomplete, a review from district servers polled informally last month:

Linda & John
Mary & Ryan
Greg & Heidi
Jen & Dave
Eric & Barbara
Jen & Brad
Mary & Ryan
Kim & Chris
Greg & Heidi
Heather & Todd
Bob & Benny
Jim & Amy
Bob & Anne
Jen & Dave
Rin & Paul
Jamie & Chad
Dana & Ed
Barry & Kim
Bob & Carol
& Ted & Alice

Rome Antics expressed here two millennia

Some people blame the architecture for Depot Town's continuously romantic mood. As with romantic languages, this block's nineteenth century Italianate Commercial buildings have their roots in the same culture—as far back as ancient Rome. Our district's built environment finds its source in the rhythmic repeats of rows of capped windows first seen in such edifices as the Palazzo Farnese. The American version of the style grew out of the Italianate Cube and Italian Villa residential designs and was later adapted to only the front façade in commercial buildings.

American architects had to build theirs of brick since the Caesars of the Roman Empire had used up all the marble with their show-off style of built environment.



Avid preservationists say the Palazzo Farnese (from Rome Antics, *by David Macauley) looks a lot like the City Body Shop, Follett House, EMU/AAUP, and other properties in Depot Town. We're not that old; we just look like it.*

Ypsilanti Food Co-Op
and the River Street Bakery

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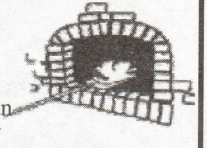
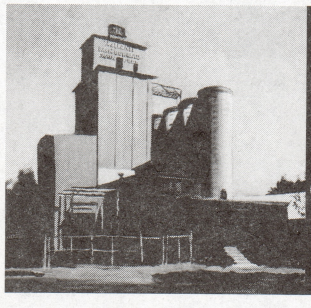
Fresh Bread in the tradition of hearth baked artisan breads available Monday Wednesday and Friday evenings





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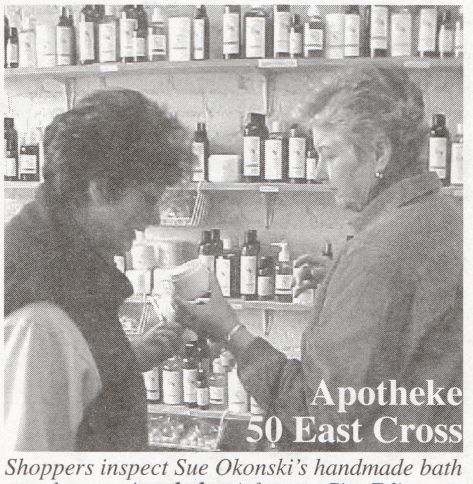

Shoppers inspect Sue Okonski's handmade bath products at ***Apotheke.*** *A former City Editor at the* Ypsilanti Press, *Okonski is celebrating her shop's fifth year in Depot Town.*

Sing a different tune

Love lyrics don't work as well as songs about how much we like our home town. According to Frank Zappa (1940-1993), popular love songs "contribute to the general aura of bad mental health in America" because they create expectations that can never be met in real life. In the absence of accurate information about love from any other source (Zappa says, "Their parents don't know, so how can they tell their kids?"), young people use lyrics to guide their behavior in relationships, often with disastrous results.

-Encyclopedia Neurotica, John Winokur

Love gone awry

• Adam Sutton's elaborate plan to propose to Erika Brussee on a small chartered plane near Rome, GA, didn't work out, as the engine stalled and the plane crashed (causing minor injuries) near their friends on the ground who were holding up signs with the actual proposal question for Brussee.

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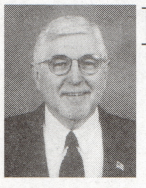
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RAGTIME

Coming events

A great year ahead:

Show & Shine
Street Rod Show

Michigan Vintage Volkswagen Show

Orphan Car Show

Camaro Superfest

Michigan Elvisfest

Michigan Summer Brew Festival

29th Ypsilanti Heritage Festival

Antique Fire Truck Muster

Antique Truck Show

Thursday Cruise Nights

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Latino Festival

Triumph Car Club

Model-T Regional Tour

Moonlight Magic

New Year Jubilee

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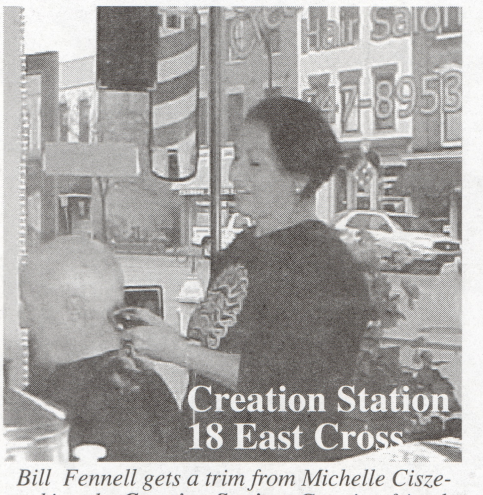

Bill Fennell gets a trim from Michelle Ciszewski at the ***Creation Station****. Greeting friends from the barber chair to the sidewalk helps to keep us connected over the years.*

How much would Elizabeth Barrett Browning have loved Depot Town?

Let us count the ways

How much do I love you?
Why, I love you all the way from the river
to the railroad tracks.
I've been to the Normal School campus
and beyond,
But this is where I map my love.
I love you to the level of everyday's
most quiet need, from morning coffee to
bar-closing and beyond.
I love you freely,
as a sidewalk conversation rambles.
I love you purely,
as Ypsilanti's church bells ring.
I love you with a love I seemed to lose
in sterile shopping centers!
And, since you asked me,
I will love you more the older you get.

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